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THE DEEP THINGS OF THE GOSPEL.

A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT THE ORDINATION

OF

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THE REV. GEORGE PUTNAM,

AS COLLEAGUE PASTOR WITH

REV. ELIPHALET PORTER, D. D.

OVER THE

FIRST CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS SOCIETY IN ROXBURY,

JULY 7, 1830.

BY ORVILLE DEWEY.

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DISCOURSE.

1 CORINTHIANS II. 10.

FOR THE SPIRIT SEARCHETH ALL THINGS, YEA, THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD.

In these words Paul characterizes his view of Christianity, and distinguishes it from that of the Jewish teachers. They could not understand the gospel; it was a 'wisdom which none of them knew,' because their minds were pre-occupied with worldly ideas of the Messiah's advent and reign. 'Had they known,' says the apostle, 'they would not have crucified him.' That apostle had received a communication of the truth from heaven. Amidst a light above the brightness of the sun, the scales of Jewish prejudice had fallen from his eyes. The despised and crucified Jesus had been manifested to him as the Lord of glory. Amidst that light, and by the aid of subsequent communications, he had seen the deep things of God in the gospel. It had become in his estimation the very wisdom of God; his brightest manifestation. As it is written, says he, quoting a passage from Isaiah, 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' And then, not referring this disclosure to a future life, as I should judge from the usual manner of quoting these words is now done, he adds, 'but God hath revealed them to

us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.' Heaven is, indeed, brought down to earth in the experience of those who feel the power of the gospel.

But what is this experience, of which it is said, that the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the worldly heart conceived it? What is this experience, which is described as a knowledge of the deep things of God? It is the experience not of philosophers as such, not of mystery, not of votaries, but simply of *them that love God.* The glories of religion are its virtues. The depths of religion are its affections. The chief thing in religion is not doctrine, but devotion. The very truths of religion — what do we mean by them, but intellectual, inward, heart-felt perceptions? Whence do we originally derive those perceptions — the very ideas of goodness, of mercy, of spiritual glory, of God himself — whence, in philosophical strictness, do we originally derive those perceptions, but from the experience of our own hearts? They are brightened, indeed, by communications from without, by doctrines, by teachings; but they are never brightened without the inward endeavor, and growing conformity of our own minds.

But on this ground I now proceed another step; and I say, not only that the chief things in religion are its affections; but that its true affections are deep, that they are justly described, by the figure in our text, as the deep things of God. And they possess too the characters appropriate to that description. They are, in proportion to their depth, calm, silent, meditative, powerful, and in their utmost depths, they possess the full consciousness of being unutterable. The sound of words, the motions of gesture, the heaving bosom, and the flashing eye, can no more tell what they are, than the swelling wave or the ripple on the sea-shore can tell what are the fathomless abysses of the ocean.

In the passage on which I have been commenting, the apostle calls the gospel, thus realized in the heart, 'the wisdom of God in a mystery:' he calls it 'the hidden wisdom.' It had been hidden in ages past, from the worldly eye, and the worldly heart, hidden from Gentile wisdom and Jewish formality, and from

human pride in all its forms, whether of admiration for outward splendor, or of confidence in recondite and mystical philosophy — hidden, not because it was in itself mysterious or unintelligible, but precisely because it was simple and spiritual. This I understand to be Paul's account of the reasons why the world was not, in his time, and all along had not been, prepared to receive the gospel. The simplicity of moral refinement is the last stage in the progress of the human mind. The great truths, the deep things of Christianity, were too singly and purely spiritual for barbarous ages, for mystical systems, for formal devotions, and speculative sectarians. This is the account to be given of the difficulties that were in the way of the ancient world. And I must venture upon the remark, that similar obstacles, since the apostle's day, have been opposed to the reception, shall I not say to the recognition, of the deep things of Christianity — to the reception, as supreme, of those simple verities which have their being and beatitude in the heart. Imposing rituals and conflicting creeds have kept men from giving that first place to the simple love of God and man, which was originally ascribed to them by the Master of Christians. Popery introduced a religion of forms; — that was not the spirit. Protestantism, a religion of doctrines;— still it was not the spirit. It remains for another, a final reformation, to establish a religion of experience; a religion of deep feeling, mingled with deep discrimination of that feeling. Of this last era, many harbingers have already appeared in the Christian world. They may be discovered in the powerful and extended religious excitements of our times, in the great and manifold enterprises of christian zeal and benevolence, and in that awakened interest in religious subjects, which marks the present period as the great religious age of the world. There is religious feeling abroad among civilized communities, such, I believe, as was never before witnessed among them; and it is to be hoped that discrimination is to come — that intellect is to be so mingled with the fermenting process of feeling, as to bring it to the great result — a true, deep, religious virtue.

The place which I have given to this simple and spiritual virtue as supreme and ultimate, I shall now undertake to vindicate for it. There is some call for this effort in the yet prevailing sentiments of the world on this subject. We hear much of some religious systems as shallow and superficial, and of others that claim to be deep and powerful; and on subjects of such general interest, it is desirable to discriminate.

I say, then, that the deep things of religion are its intelligent affections. And rightly to teach the obligation, the sanctity and the blessedness of these affections, to distinguish the genuine from the spurious, to carry the work of conscience farther and farther into the inmost recesses of the soul, to extend and multiply its applications to every sphere and every action of human life; to show, at the same time, what intimacy virtue and piety hold with all human welfare, and what essential blighting, war, and desolation wait on every departure from them, to show, in other words, the great interest and the great evil, in their true light; to bring the human mind into a holy and blessed sympathy with the mind that was in Christ, to lead it to a sacred, delightful, and habitual communion with God — these are the deep things of preaching.

How deep, then, are the simplest virtues of Christianity — for I would first illustrate the abstract and absolute proposition — how deep are the simplest virtues of Christianity; distinguished as they are in this respect from the virtues of all other religions, and from all the systems of conventional and worldly morality.

The man who has brought his conscience under the dominion of Christian principles, will find that many things which to others are matters of indifference, to him are matters of duty, and that many words, which in the world's dialect describe only a decent behaviour, in the record of his conscience, describe deep obligations. Such words are alms-giving, temperance, social courtesy, public worship, the hallowing the sabbath; and with not a few, even the words honesty, truth-telling, and the legal oath, especially that of the Custom-House, fall under the same de-

scription. With multitudes, many of these things are mere matters of form, heartless homages to public opinion, or selfish calculations of private interest; but to the man who bears a Christian conscience with him, they are things in which his heart is interested — they are testimonies of sacred reverence to principle. To him, honesty is not policy, but obligation; truth-telling is not fear, but principle; and the legal oath is not a slight form, but a solemn appeal to heaven. To him, alms-giving is not a reckless impulse or a conformity with custom; temperance is not just so much apparent abstinence as public opinion imposes; social courtesy is not a compulsory and heartless civility; public worship is not a respectful attitude; and hallowing the sabbath not a superstitious and stupid reverence for hours and minutes, or for the sun that shines on that day. I have seen men devoid of all religious principle and affection, as full of this traditional reverence as any others. While a good man, doubly free in thought, and yet doubly strict in conscience, cheerful in countenance and not constrained in manners, welcomes the day with a simple desire and determination to use its opportunities, just as he would use all other opportunities, for his religious improvement.

So it is in all things. That humble and often despised word, virtue — the thing itself an obstacle to grace in the account of some, the form of outward actions with others — but to a reflecting and conscientious man how much does that word mean! What a deep struggle does he often find that it requires to live virtuously, to resist, not to say the grossest passions, yet those passions whose gratifications deserve the name of vice, if they do not bear it? With Paul, to 'keep the body under,' even in the matter of the amount and quality of food, is a virtue which many men called Christians, nay, many *called* eminent Christians, have not learned to practice. The surface of virtue is decency, but decency is only the surface. The principles within that sustain it, are strong effort, and rigid self-denial, and sleepless vigilance. Nay, and with many the surface could not be kept unbroken without a firm and deep foundation beneath.

It is a hard matter with many to live decently; to say no violent words, and commit no violent acts, to be always considerate and reasonable in behaviour, to spread the restraints of calm reflection over every strong and out-breaking impulse.

To bring one further instance, which, though it be the highest, is nevertheless one of the most familiar, accredited, and I had almost said commonplace, in the system of Christianity—I speak of that affection to which, as I have before said, Paul refers as the great qualification for understanding the gospel,—the love of God. All, indeed, will acknowledge it to be a deep affection; but it may be that few, if any of us know, what profound disclosures, what bright revelations it might afford us of the deep things of truth, and of the gospel; what high and sacred improvement it might minister to all our faculties, what a transcendent joy to our affections, what a new creation it might spread around us, and within us, what a sustaining and satisfying good it might be to us, beyond — oh! infinitely beyond all that the eye hath seen, or the ear heard, or the earthly heart conceived! Nay, and I fear that we fail of this partly because the affection of love to God holds such a conceded and familiar place in our system; that we make no discovery of its depth and power, precisely because it is accounted so simple and obvious, just as we pass over those wonders of the creation which lie in our daily path; that we ask not for the great revelations of this central light because like the sun, it holds so visible and conspicuous a place in our moral system; that we fail, in fact, to make this principle the greatest of all, precisely because we are always so readily and easily admitting it to be the greatest. This is no anomaly in the human mind; but a fact of many and wide applications. The very foundation of moral truth and excellence for a long time failed to be discovered, because it lay in simple consciousness. And many of those things which we the least believe and realize, are things that we constantly, unhesitatingly, and therefore passively admit. And many of the subjects that we most need to reason about, to develope, illustrate, and place in new lights, are the very subjects that are so familiar as never to suggest a doubt whether we understand them.

It therefore needs to be said with some emphasis that 'the *first* and *great* commandment is,—thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' The comprehension of moral excellence is our chief distinction as human beings; for animals reason. And the love of the Supreme Excellence is the highest measure of that distinction. It is that love, I am persuaded, that is yet to do more for the improvement, the virtue and happiness of the world, than has yet been conceived. It is prayer, it is communion with that great Being, that is to enlighten, strengthen, ennoble and bless us, beyond all earthly thought and imagination. And of all subjects that come within the range of the human understanding, it is not science, it is not nature, it is not the mind of man, it is not angelic glory, but it is the perfection of God, that should draw forth our most earnest desires, our deepest meditations, our profoundest inquiries. How do we admire and love some of those beings, the wise, the holy, the almost angelic—some of those beings, whom God has made even on earth! The greeting, the welcome, the lifted voice of a great people to its noble patriots, defenders, benefactors, and philanthropists, presents to us one of the most moving scenes in the world. Our own individual admiration for them is one of the most glorious exercises of our affections. To understand great minds is one of the loftiest exertions of our own minds. What then shall it be to rise towards a comprehension of the All-wise, the All-perfect, the Infinite? The expectation of that growing knowledge is the great hope of immortality!

Nay, more; the conception which a man entertains of the moral perfection of God is the deepest test of his character. Because he ascribes to God all the perfections of which he can conceive. That is his very idea of God—all conceivable excellence, extended to infinity. But his moral conceptions necessarily arise from his own experience, and are therefore a test of it. No bad man, in a bad state of his mind, has lofty moral ideas of God. He may use lofty words, he may have a blind awe; but he has no clear and high conceptions of the moral beauty of the

divine character, and that mournful deficiency is one of the penalties that follow transgression. And the degrees of piety, I believe, may be graduated by the same test. I know of no more marked difference among pious men, than in the veiws they entertain of God's love. Tell me what a Christian thinks, not of doctrines, not of the decrees, not of election, but what he thinks of the love of God, and I will tell you what is the measure of his piety. The same remark, on a careful analysis, will be found, I believe, to apply to communities. Tell us concerning any barbarous, pagan nations, what their gods are, and we can tell what are the degrees of moral improvement among them. Tell us, too, concerning the Christian ages, and concerning the Christian sects, what are their ideas of God, and we can safely and confidently speak to the same point with regard to them. Wherever are found, prevailing and uncontradicted, ideas of God that impeach his moral perfections, there and in that proportion, will be discovered a great obtuseness of moral feeling among the people. It must be so; for their feelings will not rise above their standard; nay, their feelings, so far as they are free at least, furnish the standard.

It would be interesting to trace the history of the Christian church by this light. But my design, at present, is only to show, that the affections of Christianity, the love of God and all its virtues, are not barely the simple and obvious matters which they are commonly taken to be; but that they go far into the entire interests, the very nature and true history of the mind; that they are indeed the deep things of God and the gospel.

Thus far, this point has been stated abstractly and absolutely. We have considered the simple and intrinsic nature of these affections.

Let us now observe, in the second place, that the virtues of Christianity require for their improvement much and deep reflection. They are not simple affections; they are not mere feelings; they do not leave the mind unemployed; they do not supersede or set it aside: they demand, for their perfection, the highest intellectual discrimination.

There is a voice of conscience in the soul; but virtue does not consist in simply listening to it, or in passively yielding to its direction. So far, indeed, is well, in the moral course; and well were it if men were led more than they are, to give heed to that voice within. But it is to be interpreted, to be understood, to be carefully distinguished from all other directions; and all this requires reflection, self-distrust, and patient discrimination. That voice is indeed to be listened to in the deepest silence of the soul; but in that listening, there is the most profound and fixed attention. There is a voice, too, in the scriptures; but that voice again, and in like manner, is to be interpreted; and how much care that interpretation requires, the history of creeds and sects sufficiently shows. Or, to make the statement more accurate, there is a moral element in our nature; and it is an element to be wrought upon. It is sure to be developed in some form, by education, by the agencies of reason, and the instructions of scripture; but whether it is developed in the best form, must depend on our own care and attention. It is—that is to say, conscience, though not formed, is modified by circumstances; and those circumstances are so various, so complicated, and often unpropitious, and there are besides so many disturbing passions within, that nothing but vigilant care, and patient reasoning, can guide the moral principle to its highest purity and elevation. God has given us a capacity for religion, but he has given it to be improved. He has placed within us the elements of virtue; but he has placed them there to be wrought by us into perfection.

Feeling about religion is not religion. The very emotion of the persecutor, the bigot, the fanatic, and the votary of forms, is a feeling about religion. Many persons have very strong religious feelings, which yet depend on considerations that are exceedingly superficial. And these feelings show that they are upon the surface—show that they have no depth, by their constant fluctuation. It is reflection that is wanted to give them thoroughness and stability; to give them the character of true Christian affections.

Virtue, in fine—and let that word now stand for all Christian excellence—virtue is a perpetual struggle to think, to feel, to act rightly; it is a constant effort of our whole spiritual nature, and not least of the intellectual part. Take, for instance, one of the calmest of the virtues, and one, as many will think, of the most negative—I mean the virtue of Christian moderation. None, perhaps, is more wanted at this day, though none is held in less repute. And I say that none requires more clear and discriminating reflection. How easy would it be—what an abandonment, in fact, of all mental discipline,—to throw ourselves into any one of the currents of opinion or feeling that are now sweeping through the Christian world; how easy to be borne along with it, and without an effort, to take our place among those who are conspicuous for zeal or orthodoxy. How easy to be a Methodist, or a Baptist, a Congregationalist, or an Episcopalian, in the technical sense of these terms, and how easy to be zealous for matters like these. How comparatively easy to act the part of the elder reformers, to make a palpable stand and division, on some point of church government or order, or of ecclesiastical subjection, as at the Protestant Reformation; or to put on a visible costume, as some sects have done; or, that which answers as well, to mark out a certain line of conduct, to adopt some mode of fanatical excess,—how easy a matter would it be! This is not what is required of us. No, but it is the far harder task of defending the medium, the right, the reasonable—of being strict without singularity, and zealous without excess, and rational without coldness; it is not to go off into some violent extreme, but to hold the mind in the balance between extremes and excesses: it is, while all sorts of extravagant things are said by all sorts of persons, and while the rage and passion of many are for something striking and emphatic, to say the thing that is strictly just and simply correct, to task the very soul to that endeavor, to be true and reasonable,—to control all wayward imaginations, to restrain all headlong impulses, to check all hasty words, though they have sprung to our very lips, to be calm and earnest, and courageous and meek, and

solemn and cheerful, and decided and forbearing—this is what is required of us; and this is the poor, dull virtue of moderation!

But I must hasten to say, in the third place, that the simple affections, the simple moralities of the gospel are deep things, in preference and in contrast to many things for which this distinction is often claimed.

To most persons, if the question were put, What are the deep things of the gospel of Christ?—the reference that would arise in their minds would immediately be to its speculative doctrines. Metaphysical systems of theology, certain views of election, and of the atonement would be pointed to, as being the depths of Christianity. These are the *deep things of men*—but not, as I apprehend, in the apostle's sense, 'the deep things of God.'

What is a doctrine? It is some view of God's character, government, providence, or grace, or it is some view of man's nature, necessities, or prospects. Now it is obvious that this view, so long as it rests in mere and cold speculation, has no strong hold on the mind, and no deep foundation in it. That which makes a doctrine deep is the fervent admiration, the profound earnestness with which it is embraced; and these are qualities of the heart.

That 'wisdom of the world by which it knew not God'—the Grecian philosophy—was much of it profound speculation. That learning of the princes of this world, the Jewish rabbins, which prevented them from perceiving the 'hidden wisdom' of the cross, was much of it profound allegory, and more profound mysticism.

The essence, the peculiarity of the Christian system lies in that character of emotion, thorough, profound, influential, habitual emotion which it requires. Speculation must become feeling, in order to be the wisdom of the gospel. Doctrines must become affections, in order to be the 'deep things of God.'

Nor yet is this emotion deep, however strong it may be, unless it is calm, fixed, and abiding. Nothing can be deep in the soul but what is true and reasonable; nothing can abide, and be eternal in human nature, but what is accordant with its reason, with its intellect. Violent excitements in religion, tumults of the soul, powerful impressions on the imagination are not—whatever else may be thought of them—are not deep things.

They may belong to a series of deep emotions; but they do not themselves bear any peculiar indications of depth. They show the marks rather of being shallow and superficial. They change, they fluctuate, they pass away. I am persuaded that in the most extravagant sects, and in their most extravagant excitements, though the shallow courtesy, the slight and dull experience of the Christian world has called *them* the men of zeal and feeling,—yet that in the most extravagant excitements, and in the most extravagant men, there is a singular want of depth and reality of feeling; it is wild, physical impulse, not deep intellectual feeling. You have all seen, perhaps, one of our summer freshets. A sudden and sweeping flood is before you. The wrecks of human labor and of nature's productions are borne along in wild confusion. Mingled curiosity and concern are depicted in the countenances of those around you. Here and there perhaps a human dwelling is swept away, and its inmates are seen struggling in the fierce torrent. To-day all is tumult and agitation; but to-morrow you look, and the flood has passed away. Was that the deep sea? Or is it a proper emblem of the depths of human feeling?

It has become common, as I have just implied, to remark, that there is the most fervor among the most ignorant classes of religionists. But if by this it be meant, that there is the most of real and permanent feeling, I utterly deny the truth of the proposition, and I consider religion as dishonored by it. There may be more of occasional, local, temporary feeling—the feeling of religious seasons and circumstances. But of deep and abiding emotion, the most is undoubtedly to be found among the most intelligent, reflecting and sober Christians. I have not a doubt, if the truth could be known, and I have heard some testimony to this effect, that among the wildest and most extravagant, and, as the world calls them, the most zealous sectarians, there are more misgivings, more speculative doubts, more doubts of the truth and reality of religion, than among any other religious persons whatever. Minds in this condition are shaken by that very reason which was given to strengthen them; and the remonstrances of that better sense against the excesses of fanati-

cism, or the cruelty of uncharitableness, are often so strong as to pass for the assaults of Satan. The powers of the soul, the affections of the heart, instead of settling down into one strong conviction and feeling, are a set of warring faculties—so distinct that it really seems to the subject of this experience as if there were actually within him, God's spirit inspiring him on the one hand, and the evil One tempting him on the other. Religion, in fact, instead of being a part of the very soul, has only made a temporary and precarious lodgment in the soul, from which it is every hour or day cast out, and to which it as often returns, again to experience the fate of change, irregularity, and comparative imbecility. And indeed, unless the soul is a confused mass of incoherent thoughts, feelings, sensations and fancies, there *can* be no thorough and consistent devotedness and fervor in it, without reflection and sobriety. There may be wayward impulses, and passionate imaginings, but the really powerful emotion is the powerful conviction—the conviction which from its very power has *become* an emotion, but which by its very *power*, too, is preserved from fanaticism. Far be it from me to say that the ignorant and unlearned may not, and do not often entertain this thorough feeling. They may possess the truest wisdom. Their minds may be active and rational, though not filled with the knowledge of books. Their feelings may be based on sober conviction, and therefore may be genuine and lasting. But extravagance and fanaticism are *not* of this character, nor do they help any one to form this character.

I should not fulfil my intention, in saying what I have thus far said, (whether with or without reference to the present occasion,) if I did not add a few words on the practical importance of the views, perhaps, very obvious ones, which I have now presented. It has not been my purpose to amuse you with a desultory or even a dexterous commentary, on that figurative description of religion which is contained in our text. I believe that the right interpretation of it does go deep into the whole subject of religion, of morals, and moral culture.

It is not difficult to see that so long as anything besides vital religion arrogates the merit of being profound, of being the deeper part of the subject, the attention of Christians, so far as that influence goes, will be diverted from the interior, ultimate, and all-comprehending interest. They will be liable to think more of doctrines or of ordinances, or of forms or professions, or general excitements, or public enterprises—more of all these and less of their own hearts. The mind naturally asks for the great things; and if there be any greater things than the simple affections of virtue and piety, it will seek for them.

And, what is still more to be regretted perhaps, practical men, as they call themselves, will have no proper comprehension of the province in which they have to labor. Practical men, if they fall into this popular error, will be superficial men. Simple Christians, as some boast themselves to be, may acquire an unexpected claim to that title. With the prevailing veiws of what is practical in religion, men are apt to think that every thing in that department is obvious, plain, and easy to be understood; that there is no difficulty, no obscurity, no liability to mistake; that they have nothing to do but to read the precept as it is written, to take the dictate of conscience as it is offered; that they have nothing to learn, and therefore nothing to study. Indeed, the boasted practical spirit of the age is far enough as yet from being a deep spirit, though as I trust, it is becoming deeper in its progress.

Then, as to preaching the deep things of the gospel, if the views which I have offered are correct, they will help us to form some conception of what it is.

Preaching the truths of religion in general terms is not preaching deeply. Preaching generally about sin, and virtue, and righteousness, about duty and danger, about heaven and hell, is not preaching deeply. Let the language employed upon these subjects be ever so strong, if it is general, it leaves the hearer indifferent, or at most only astounded at the representation, but never penetrated and pierced in heart; it is not deep preaching. The great evil of men's thoughts about all these things is, that they are general.

It is the very business of the preacher to make them specific; to give a point, and an edge to those things, which all men handle, and scarcely any body feels—which all men handle as if they were the most harmless, and the most useless things in the world.

Preaching to the imagination is not preaching deeply. Let us distinguish. Preaching to the heart *through* the imagination, may be deep instruction. Preaching *from* the imagination is instructing wisely; the importance of its aid can scarcely be overrated. It makes much of the difference which gives to some preachers the power and interest that attend them. There is scarcely anything more wanted in our pulpits than illustration. But preaching *to* the imagination is a different thing. If any one addresses himself to that faculty chiefly, if all truth passes before the eyes of his hearers in pictures of the fancy, though they be the most beautiful pictures, if he kindles up the highest fervors of imagination, and leaves it there, no sounding brass, nor tinkling cymbal, could be more hollow and useless. Nor will the darkest and most terrific images any more avail, without some other power, to penetrate the soil of the human heart. They will but spread shadows over the field which it is the office of religion to cultivate.

Preaching much in technical language and a cant tone, is not likely to be deep preaching. If ever this holy function is clothed with its proper energy, if ever moral power is enthroned in the pulpit as it may be, if ever the feet of them that preach glad tidings are beautiful upon the mountains—that function will not be a form, that dominion will not be a bondage to rules, those footsteps will not be clogged with ignoble fetters. The stranger that should loiter around our walls will not know, as soon as he comes within the sound of our voice, that *that* is preaching. And if he will enter in, he will find that it is not a sermon merely that demands his reverent attention, but that powerful truth, freely put forth, has laid its grasp upon his mind; that no countenance dressed with sanctimony is upon him, but one that look-

eth into the heart; that the voice which expostulates with him is as the voice of his friend at the fireside; and these things shall enter into his heart with a reality, that shall make him feel that it is no dull preaching, but demonstration of the spirit and power that are dealing with him.

Deep preaching, my brethren, must be like that of our Saviour, moral and practical. And there is nothing more false, in my judgment, than the common ideas of this practical, moral preaching. It is considered as a dull repetition of trite and commonplace thoughts about duty, virtue, &c. 'To be good, to be good,' is thought to be the amount of it. There is nothing, in fact, that requires so much discrimination as the moral precepts that we deliver; and they receive far too little of it. The hearer does not feel partly because the matter is so loosely stated, that he does not know what to feel, or because it is so extravagantly stated, that he cannot feel it. And many sermons, too, which have a definite subject, have no definite and deep moral aim; all is general, if not vague, superficial if not false, and useless, if not dull. And with the body of the clergy—I must state the fact, and cannot be answerable for the construction that may be put upon my doing so—with the body of the clergy in this country, doctrines occupy, I do not say all their attention, but almost all their powers of discrimination. To make distinctions and modifications of certain doctrines, to defend them, and any way to sustain them in the public mind, calls forth, and it evidently requires a prodigious expense, not to say, mispense of talent. And when the descent is made from doctrines to precepts, it seems to be thought that there is no farther occasion for acumen, and the whole effort commonly resolves itself into an effort for impression. Indeed the profound study of Christian morals, the careful distinction of moral and spiritual affections one from another, and of the principles and considerations applicable to each, their uses to the improvement and happiness of the mind, and then, the application of them all to the whole scene of human life, to government, to legislation, to litigation,

to suffrage, to the common weal, to labor, to business, to domestic life, to society, to recreation—this extended view has certainly not yet been taken of the business of preaching.

There is a call, then, for deep preaching; and it is meet that people and preachers should know it. There is a call, not only in circumstances, in prevailing defects, but in the deep nature and ever-during wants of the human soul.

He that preaches to the human conscience, must preach deeply. There are awful depths within it, and it is the tone of no factitious eloquence that must reach them. No well dressed harangue, no well balanced periods, no voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely, will do this, but the voice that is thus to penetrate the soul, and commune with conscience, must be embodied truth, wisdom, sobriety, power—and more than all, experience. He who deals with the conscience, must do it as one who has experience, who has communed with it in the depth and silence of his own heart, who has felt how awful and sovereign is that power, and will hold no compromise with a lax and worldly morality, that speaks of conscience as a common thing, and resigns it to such fate as the claims of courtesy or the exigencies of trade will give it.

He who preaches concerning sin, must preach deeply. It is the deep and deadly curse, the calamity to which all other evils are slight in comparison, the darkness in the soul which no shade of earthly misfortune can essentially deepen. It is more than calamity; it is guilt—it is wrong done to ourselves and to the goodness of our Maker. I speak not now of necessary imperfection, but of voluntary and cherished offences. I know, indeed, that it is possible to use general language unjustifiably strong on this subject, and to make extravagant representations. But he, who should go to the depths of this evil, unfold it fully, and show what it is, show how it blights every glorious faculty, and blessed affection, show what mournful desolation it spreads through the soul, and the infinite loss which it entails on an immortal nature,—he who should speak as one who had felt in the

grief of his own breast, how evil and bitter a thing it is, would make an impression to which no general phrases of theological extravagance could add a deeper horror.

There is a species of discourses, sometimes called fine discourses, containing beautiful representations of virtue, or moving pictures of life and providence, which soften and elevate the mind, and fill it with a temporary enthusiasm. And these in their place are well; for we must bring from our treasure things new and old, and touch as we can all the springs of the soul. But he who deals with the human heart, must do more than this. He must go deeper. He must come to a closer and stronger grapple with the affections. He must oftentimes strike home, and strike hard, or he will make no strong or durable impression.

That preaching which always excites men, and especially that which excites them to a delightful enthusiasm, though it is excellent in its way, and though it is indeed much needed, yet is not, I fear, the deepest preaching. I have an idea of preaching, and it is one which I should desire above all things to exemplify, which goes far beyond all this. It is a simple and holy faithfulness, it is a discriminating and uncompromising appeal to men's duties and faults, it is placing the finger on the very points on which their consciences are daily exercised, it is going down into the very midst of the conflicts of life and of the trials of virtue, and unfolding the very questionings of the heart with itself, and familiarly talking with our hearers of those things which they are every day thinking and doing — in fine, it is a holy calmness of expostulation, and an awful sobriety of instruction like that of Jesus. This might not be the most delightful preaching, and it might not be thought the most eloquent, but it would be the most useful, and the most effective. It would not send away the hearers with the voice of eulogy upon their lips, but with the silent and solemn conviction of truth in their hearts.

And that scene in which human hearts have their lot, and that mighty interest which they embosom, require the same treat-

ment. I know not how it may seem to you, my brethren, but he who preaches to me of human life, must preach deeply. It is no superficial scene, though many of its aspects are such. Its wants do not all lie on the surface. Its most powerful conflicts are not with poverty, or pain, but with inward anxiety, dissatisfaction, fear and trouble. He who preaches upon life, must penetrate, dissect, analyze, — and find the secret, and sorrowing or rejoicing spirit of it. He must carry his thoughts into its most retired scenes and affections. He must understand many states of mind, and deliver many messages, and yet all these messages must be distinct and appropriate, and such as only intimacy with the case can deliver.

The argument, indeed, which human life, taken in connexion with the faculties and wants of the mind — the argument, I say, which it furnishes in favor of religion, in favor of the Christian religion, and of a deep and vital interest in it, is a fruitful subject, yet, as I venture to think, more fully to be developed. Life is a preacher, if we could learn to give an interpretation to it, more powerful than any human voice. The truth is, without any reference to miracles, or to the external evidences in favor of our religion, that some such reliance is necessary. The mind, conscious of its situation and of its wants, could not *live* in any comfort or strength without it.

Once more, he who preaches to human interests must preach deeply. What they are is by no means, as yet, fully understood. There is no practical appreciation, among the mass of men, of their real interests. There is a prevailing delusion and blindness upon this matter. If men would seek the real interests of their minds and hearts with but half the zeal that they give to visible acquisitions, there would be witnessed a change in the world such as the progress of ages now cannot make. He who treats of this theme must go deeply into the human heart. He must show that every man bears within him a world of interests, to which the outward world is but a vanishing shadow. This would be the spirituality and power of the Gospel. Men would

begin to act for the soul's welfare, as they have acted for the body's gratification, and the world's applause. It would be life from the dead — to our words, to our thoughts, to our preaching, to our practice, life from the dead.

Finally, he who preaches Christ, must preach deeply. He must preach Christ crucified, the passion, the patience, the fortitude, the gracious interposition, the peace-speaking blood, the all-subduing example of Jesus Christ. He must preach deep repentance, deep humility, deep submission to God, — yes, and deep reliance, resolution, joy, and peace. Many other things may interest him, but beneath all other interests, beneath all other purposes, deeper than all, dearer than all, must be the purposes, the meditations, the prayers, the tender sympathies, the blessed aims and hopes that belong to this holy ministry.

Brethren of this religious Society,—I rejoice with you and with Him who has walked among you many days in the holy office of the ministry, in your past prosperity. I rejoice with you and with our young Brother, in your present prospects. I rejoice with him, that the labors of his youth are to be united with the wisdom of experience. May he preach to you the deep things of the gospel of Christ. May you be grounded and built up in them, 'till you all come, the teachers and the taught, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto perfect men, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.'

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM NEWELL.

My Friend and Brother,

In conformity to an ancient and expressive usage, founded on the example of the apostles, and adopted and handed down to us by our New England fathers, it is my pleasant office on this occasion to offer you, by the appropriate symbol, the fellowship of the assembled churches.

I need not repeat what has often been said at similar times, that by this act we do not pretend to confer any rights, to which you were not entitled without it; or to give any divine and indispensable sanction to the sacred connexion already formed between an independent society and the pastor of their choice. Nor, in thus formally receiving you to the privileges of christian fellowship, do we presume to lay you under any obligation, express or implied, that shall interfere with that perfect freedom of thought and of action, which belongs of right to every individual. 'For we have not dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy.' In joining hands with you, we do not enter into a compact for the support and propagation of any particular system of doctrine and discipline. We do not enlist you into the service of a party. We do not bind or expect you to march in the ranks of any theological army, under any sectarian chief, to any religious war.

Accept, then, my friend, and I rejoice to add, my brother, accept this Right Hand of Fellowship, which, in the name and on the behalf of the assembled churches, I now offer you in gladness and in love, as a simple token of cordial welcome to our christian brotherhood. By this symbol we invite you to the friendly acts and mutual courtesies of ministerial intercourse: we recognise you as our equal in office, our brother in the service of Christ, our fellow-laborer in the cause of truth and virtue, our fellow-warrior in the conquest of infidelity and sin. By this symbol we promise you all the aid and relief, all the counsel and co-operation, which you may need and which we can give; our assistance in your labors; our advice and encouragement in your perplexities; our fraternal sympathy in your trials; our joy in your success.

And you will remember, my brother, that while I have given you my hand, you have given me yours. The symbol and the promise are mutual. We may therefore expect in return the same offices of friendship and co-operation, which we have been pledging to you.

And now permit me, my friend, if I may be allowed, on this public occasion, an expression of private feeling, permit me to welcome you in my own name, and to utter the joyful greetings of my own tongue and heart, as you take the charge of this united christian flock and enter on your heaven-ward course, with the elder Shepherd at your side, in the pleasant places where your lot has fallen.

I bid you the glad welcome of personal friendship to the duties and pleasures, the honors and rewards of the christian ministry. That wearing toils and sore trials will also be ours there is no doubt. But what calling of mortal life is free from them? And if that on which we are entering have peculiar hardships and responsibilities, has it not also its peculiar privileges and satisfactions?

We are often called, it is true, to painful and affecting scenes. We must visit the couches of sickness and witness

its quick and fearful ravages, or its slow sad wastings. But we go not only to see, but to relieve suffering, not only to shed the tear of sympathy, but to wipe away the tear of sorrow. We must often enter the chamber of death. But we enter it with a message of immortal life, and with the words of Christ to the mourners, 'Your friend is not dead, but sleepeth.' We must often follow the funeral train to the open grave; the grave, perhaps, of the most loved and useful of the flock. But we go, the heralds of a resurrection, to take from that grave its victory, and to say with the angels at the tomb of Jesus, 'He is not here, he is risen.' We must watch and toil for the cause which we have espoused. But in our watchings and toils is there not a joy set before us? a crown over the cross? 'the luxury of doing good?' the promise, that 'they who turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars forever and ever?' True, we can do far less than we wish for the good of men. But we can do something—and that little is glorious. And it were folly to be cast down because we have not angels' tongues or angels' wings; the rod of Moses or the speech of Aaron. If in the faithful use of the gift that *is* given us we can urge or lead a few souls only to duty and God, it is enough. The servant of the Lord may depart in peace.

Again, then, I bid you welcome, brother, to the *pleasures* of the christian ministry, which, if it have much to dishearten and oppress, has yet more to animate and cheer us. May it be your happiness to find it so, by the pleasant experience of many useful years: so that when your feet shall at length totter on the brink of the invisible world, you may look from a happy past to a happy future. May it be your blessedness—the blessedness of the aged and faithful pastor.

> 'Behold him in the even-tide of life,
> A life well-spent, whose early care it was
> His riper years should not upbraid his green.'

May thy labours, my brother, be crowned with the love of thy people. May the eye that sees thee bless thee, and the ear that hears thee bear witness to thee. And I utter the prayer not only of a christian brother, but of an affectionate friend, when I reverently invoke the Holy Spirit of God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to guide and guard, to bless and sanctify thee in thy word and work. May he give thee grace to stir up the gift that is in thee. For

'God towards thee hath done his part, do thine.'

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE.

BY MR PARKMAN, OF BOSTON.

The relation of a minister and people, which has now, agreeably to the received usages of our churches, been established, involves, like all other relations and privileges, reciprocal duties. While, therefore, brethren and friends of this christian society, we offer you our cordial congratulations on the events of this day, gratifying, as they are, to your hopes, you will permit us to remind you, that if they convey a privilege, they impose also an obligation. You have heard, already, of the duties of your pastor. Suffer, we pray you, the word of exhortation, while, with all simplicity, we speak to you of your own.

Behold, then, christian brethren, this man of your choice, and receive him with all gladness, as the servant of God, and as your servant for the gospel's sake. He comes hither at your call; which, by its favorable result, and that observation of events, which a true piety suggests, we are warranted in interpreting as the call of God's Providence. You have desired him for your spiritual teacher, pastor, and friend: and to share his labors with one, whom you have long known and honored in these sacred relations. The very terms, by which they are expressed, while they distinctly mark his duties, not obscurely intimate yours. For the relation, we have said, is reciprocal; and the benefit, it promises from him, implies an obligation on you.

1. He comes as your teacher. Receive, we pray you, the truth from his lips, and open your hearts, that it may

enlighten and sanctify you. It is *his* duty to preach to you that gospel, in the faith of which we stand. It is *yours*, to give to it your constant, patient, and serious hearing. This place of your solemnities will be the peculiar scene, and the sabbath, the stated season of his instructions. Come, then, my brethren, to this house with every returning sabbath, not only, as we will hope, in the multitude of God's mercies, but with a grateful joy; in a devout reverence and hearty love of this day, as the day of your blessing and hope; as the day, which the Lord hath made, and consecrated, by his goodness, to the best interests of man; to the nourishment of your souls, to the relief of your cares, to the solace of your sorrows, to the order of your families, to the repose and happiness of the world. A due regard for the sabbath and its ordinances will be the best security for your constant attendance on its services. A deep-rooted piety, far beyond a mere admiration of the preacher, or any subordinate considerations, will prevent your forsaking either the morning or the evening service. As in the days of your venerable fathers, of Eliot, of Danforth, and Adams, the afternoon will witness your faithful presence and your full assemblies. You will not suffer a little heat, or a little cold, a threatening cloud or a summer's sun, your noontide slumber, or any fancied claims of hospitality, nor yet the certain prospect of ministrations from other lips than those of your pastors, to detain you. For the feelings of your heart will be those of the devout worshipper of old; 'How amiable are thy tabernacles! I have loved, O Lord, the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth.'

Your personal attachment to your pastor will, we doubt not, mingle itself with these devout affections, and become to him and to yourselves a source of grateful satisfaction. But allow me, brethren, to exhort you to be moderate, as of your expectations concerning him, so also of your early commendations of him. 'He, who flattereth his neighbor,' says the wise man, 'spreadeth a snare for his feet.' And he, who suffers in his youth, from extravagant hopes of what he *may do*, may expect

to suffer much more, as he advances, from unjust depreciations of what he *has done*. Do not, therefore, exalt him as your idol, lest, at the last, you humble him by your injustice. An enduring attachment to your minister will be best promoted,—not by anticipations, which no gifts or efforts of his, nay, not the gifts of a seraph, may satisfy; not by partialities, which, in exact proportion to their extravagance, will, assuredly, by the law of all excesses, end in indifference; not by that unreasonable fondness for him, which shall indispose you to receive the good services of others; but by a just and friendly estimate of his actual attainments and character; of what he is, and of what you see him desirous to be; that attachment, which will grow with his growth, and settle, with his advancing years and your experience of his worth, into a solid, respectful affection,—the proper reward of his fidelity, and the true bond of union between a pastor and his people.

I have spoken thus freely of the dangers of extravagant expectation and of extravagant praise, because it belongs to the ardor of our community, and is a natural fruit of the freshness of its institutions, to demand much from youth. But you will deem it reasonable to look to your pastor for his choicest fruits, not in the spring-time, but in the autumn of his days. You will accept his early services, not so much with rapture as if he had already attained—(for rapture, my brethren, belongs to angels rather than to men, to the spirits made perfect rather than to beings on trial, and is at best, on this side heaven, but a transient emotion)—as with candid minds and seriousness of heart. And to assist you in the charitable judgment, which the novelty of his duties may rightly claim, I will only advert to the obvious, but certainly not unimportant consideration, that it is the peculiarity of the ministerial profession, that the youngest of its members are initiated, with their first entrance upon it, into its most laborious and delicate offices: that while, in the other walks of professional employment, there is a gradual progress from the less to the more arduous; and only after long experience, is the physician or the lawyer

entrusted with a critical case;—the youngest minister is introduced, at once, to all the labors of his vocation; and from the very nature of its services, is called to teach and to preside, when, under a painful consciousness of inexperience, he would gladly seek for himself instruction.

2. But you have invited this our friend to become not only your teacher, but your pastor. You will welcome him, therefore, to your dwellings, and to the intimate scenes of your domestic retirement. As a true shepherd, he will come to you, not seeking dominion over your faith, but as watching for your souls. He will rejoice in your joys; and he will heartily sympathise in your sorrows. It will be among his chosen pleasures, one of the blessed offices and purest rewards of his ministry, by his counsel, sympathies, and prayers, to comfort the sorrowful, to strengthen among you the feeble-minded; to scatter the darkness of unbelief; to revive hope to the desolate; to reclaim the wanderer; to speak peace to the wounded or the contrite heart; to meet the wants and the sorrows of your souls.

But, my brethren, while it belongs to him to perform with all fidelity these indispensable, arduous offices, you will not fail to perceive how much it will depend on you, to render them profitable. In the time of your sorrow, in your chambers of sickness, and at the bed of death, I know that you will welcome him, because sorrow loves consolation. But you must labor with him to make his more accustomed pastoral intercourse, not agreeable only, but salutary; not a mere social gratification, which yet in its season is desirable, and with which he must sometimes be satisfied, but a spiritual benefit. If you seek for religious improvement from even his most familiar visits, you must contribute your part to the work. Do not meet his modest, but conscientious efforts at religious conversation with constrained looks; with a chilling repulse, or a blank indifference. Do not hasten to divert it to the easier topics of the day, to the state of the weather, to the aspect of the clouds, to the prospects of the harvest, the embarrassments

of trade, or even the most engrossing subject of political speculation. But let 'thought meet thought;' and his affectionate endeavors to render his pastoral intercourse, at once serious, natural, and useful, be seconded by your own.

On the other hand, do not be swift to complain, as are some, that his visits are short or infrequent. For he will have many to make, to those, too, of whom you may know nothing; and if faithful to all, he will find little leisure beyond the calls of duty. The poor, the sick, and the aged; they, whose friends are gone, or who are themselves departing; they, whose temporal hopes are withered, and whose hearts are made sad; the anxious, the perplexed, and the humbled, will need his assiduous cares. When, therefore, my brethren, you and your families are prospering, your houses safe from fear, and no rod of God upon your dwelling, though you may think you need him, and know you would welcome him, do not forget, that others are needing him more. Be satisfied, that he is doing good, though you may not be the immediate objects of it; and imagine not that he has forgotten you, because he is not present with you. The names of the children of Israel were inscribed upon the breast-plate of Aaron, and 'he bore them upon his heart before the Lord continually.* Think, also, that your pastor is mindful of you, even when he is far from you; that in the retirement of his study, which, if you desire fruit from his labors, must be his *home;* amidst weariness and sickness, which he may suffer as well as you; and while most employed for others, his thoughts and his prayers are still for you. Regard him, therefore, as your friend; and allow him at all times the privilege of friendship—a generous confidence in the kindness of your disposition, and your favorable interpretation of his motives.

3. Finally, brethren, it is not the least among our congratulations with you and with him this day, that your young pastor will not stand alone; that amidst the new scenes and duties before him, he will be instructed and encouraged by one, in

* Exodus xxv. 29.

whose paternal experience and affection he can securely confide. I may not here enlarge upon this—your privilege and his. The decorum of this place, and of the circumstances, under which I speak, will allow me only to say, that you have long enjoyed, as we hope you may long continue to enjoy, the blessings of a faithful ministry.* The history of your religious society, especially in these days of innovation and fervor, when many false prophets have gone forth, and much is done and boasted in the name of religion, which has nothing but the name—the history of this church, my friends, has shown you the lasting benefits of that wisdom, that dwells with prudence; of that zeal, which is guided by knowledge; of that patient waiting and confidence of faith, which can look serenely on the changes of others, itself remaining unchanged. You have witnessed here that moderation, whose praises we have heard this morning set forth; that evangelic grace, of which the Son of God was the example; which, with no false confidence or arrogance of soul, but with power, and in love and a sound mind, amidst the excitements of a restless zeal, and fervors, that pass away, meekly obeys that word of the Lord, once spoken by his prophet, 'Let them return unto thee; but go not thou to them;' and whose abiding influence is seen in the peaceful fruits of righteousness, in the subduing eloquence of a blameless life.

And now, brethren and friends, we commend you and your pastor to God and to the word of his grace. And may God himself, even our Father, direct his way unto you. And the Lord make you to abound in love, one towards another, and towards all men, to the end, that he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

* The Rev. Dr Porter, with whom Mr Putnam is now associated as colleague, was ordained in October, 1782, and has therefore labored in the ministry nearly forty-eight years.